

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

September 9, 2016

His Excellency Kenichiro Sasae
The Ambassador of Japan
2520 Massachusetts Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20008

Dear Ambassador Sasae:

We are writing to urge the Government of Japan to institute an effective ban on domestic trade in elephant ivory, as the United States and other nations are taking the same actions. We recognize your leadership in increasing penalties for those convicted of wildlife trafficking and call upon you to build on those successful efforts.

Africa's elephants continue to be subject to intense poaching. The recent Great Elephant Census found that **the population of Africa's Savanna elephants has decreased by 30% from 2007 to 2014. An estimated 100,000 elephants were killed for their ivory between 2010 and 2012.** On the black market, a pound of ivory is worth more than gold, and has become a source of funding for rebel militias and terrorist groups like the Lord's Resistance Army, Al-Shabaab and Boko Haram.

To help combat this poaching, the United States federal government recently finalized a near total ban nationwide on domestic ivory trade. Additionally, some states, including California, New Jersey, New York and Washington, have enacted total statewide bans on the sale of elephant ivory, and other states, such as Oregon, are moving to pass similar bans. China and Hong Kong have also announced similar commitments to address this global challenge. Later this year, at the 17th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) in South Africa, the United States will join with African elephant range states, including Gabon, Kenya, Nigeria, and Chad, in presenting proposals urging other nations, including Japan, to institute strong domestic bans on ivory trade.

This growing momentum and progress may be undermined, if Japan remains a major consumer of elephant ivory. In particular, we are concerned that:

- ***Japan has more ivory retailers (more than 8,000), ivory manufacturers (more than 300) and ivory wholesalers (more than 500) than any other nation,*** as presented in Japan's report to the CITES Standing Committee in January 2016;
- Recent reports in the Japanese press highlight a failure to require proof of legal origin of ivory tusks presented for registration under the government-authorized scheme managed by the Japan Wildlife Research Center (JWRC), a non-governmental body;

- Japanese ivory traders are believed to be selling ivory tusks intended for illegal export to China and significant quantities of ivory from Japan have been seized in China; and
- Retailers, such as Rakuten Ichiba and Yahoo! Japan online shopping, and auction sites carry thousands of ads for ivory, much of it for *hanko* name seals often reported as made from unregistered or illegal tusks.

We urge the Government of Japan to enact a domestic ban on ivory prior to the CITES September meeting and look forward to working with the Government of Japan to eliminate domestic ivory trade to ensure the conservation of Africa's dwindling elephant populations.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter and we look forward to hearing from you. If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact our offices.

Sincerely,



Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress



Daniel M. Donovan, Jr.
Member of Congress



Suzanne Bonamici
Member of Congress



Tony Cardenas
Member of Congress



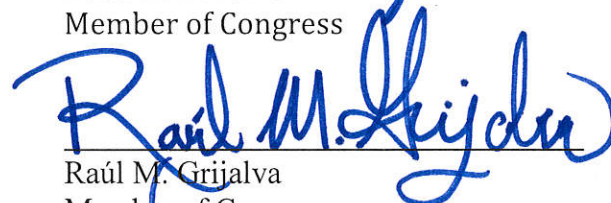
Susan A. Davis
Member of Congress



Peter A. DeFazio
Member of Congress



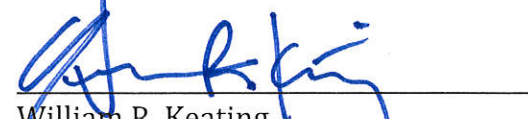
Suzan K. DelBene
Member of Congress



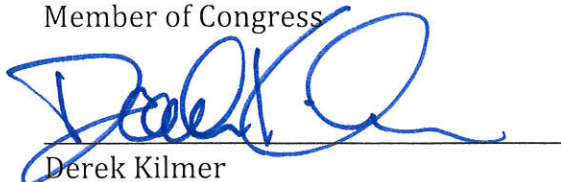
Raúl M. Grijalva
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